

Cantwell, Baird Urge President to Establish National Meth Prevention Week (July 27, 2006)

Washington, D.C. - Washington Senator Maria Cantwell and Congressman Brian Baird today urged President Bush to set official dates for a National Methamphetamine Prevention Week (*letter below*). The lawmakers succeeded in passing legislation (S. Res. 313 and H. Res. 556) earlier this year that calls for the creation of such a week to help increase awareness of the meth epidemic and educate the public about the dangers of meth use.

"Methamphetamine is invading communities across America at an epidemic rate," said Cantwell. "A national meth prevention week will give educators, parents, communities, and local law enforcement an important opportunity to confront this growing problem, direct people to the help they need, and educate our youth and our citizens on how to prevent the use of this dangerous, highly addictive drug. I look forward to working with Congressman Baird and the President to take the final step needed get this week on the calendar."

Cantwell and Baird are pushing for a Meth Prevention Week in part because the numbers of meth-related arrests, meth lab seizures, and meth treatment admissions have increased in recent years. The lawmakers are also concerned about links between meth abuse and identity theft, domestic violence, and child abuse and the influx of foreign meth coming across U.S. borders. Cantwell and Baird asked the President to establish Meth Prevention Week during the school year so teachers and administrators will have an opportunity to engage students in meth prevention lessons and activities.

"As a former clinical psychologist who worked with meth-addicted patients, I know how devastating this drug can be," said Baird. "Prevention and education are key to stopping the spread of the meth epidemic. A National Meth Prevention Week will help raise awareness of meth abuse and educate young people about the dangers of this deadly, ruinous drug."

The legislators' National Meth Prevention Week proposal has received the support of the National Association of Counties (NACo), National Criminal Justice Association, National Narcotic Officers Associations' Coalition, and private companies like Drugstore.com.

Cantwell has worked tirelessly to promote meth awareness initiatives, increase funding for anti-meth programs, and move meth ingredients behind pharmacy counters. Earlier this year, Cantwell worked with her colleagues to include the Combat Meth Act and other anti-meth measures in legislation to re-authorize the Patriot Act. This new law restricts the sale of products used to produce meth, provides funds to help those affected by meth use, and gives new tools to states, law enforcement, and prosecutors working to combat meth. The legislation also authorizes \$99 million for the Meth Hot Spots program, which provides grants to states and communities to clean up meth labs, purchase equipment, and train state and local law enforcement officials to investigate and convict meth offenders.

Cantwell has also sponsored the Arrest Methamphetamine Act to curb meth trafficking across the U.S.-Canadian border into Washington, as well as legislation to investigate the link between meth crimes and other criminal activity such as identity theft.

Baird, a national leader in the anti-meth fight, founded the Congressional Caucus to Fight and Control Methamphetamine in 2000 and helped write the comprehensive Combat Meth Epidemic Act that was signed into law earlier this year. The Office of National Drug Control Policy (ONDCP) requested Baird's input on meth for its 2006 National Drug Control Strategy and 2006 Synthetic Drug Control Strategy, and implemented a number of his suggestions.

The Congressman has also been instrumental in bringing millions of federal dollars to Southwest Washington's law enforcement to help fight meth in our local communities. He is also leading the congressional effort to stop the international influx of meth coming across our nation's borders. Baird has publicly called on President Bush to convene an international summit that will bring world leaders together to address the worldwide meth epidemic and craft a coordinated strategy to stop international meth trafficking.

July 27, 2006

President George W. Bush

The White House

1600 Pennsylvania Avenue, NW

Washington, D.C. 20500

Dear President Bush,

We write today to request the establishment of a "National Methamphetamine Prevention Week" to draw attention to the growing problem of methamphetamine abuse and increase public awareness of the drug's dangers.

We are pleased to notify you of the recent passage of two identical bills, House Resolution 556 and Senate Resolution 313, expressing the sense of the House and Senate that a "National Methamphetamine Prevention Week" should be established. This national observance - the first to draw attention to the growing epidemic of methamphetamine abuse - would provide communities with a valuable opportunity to educate citizens on how to prevent the use of this damaging narcotic, and would increase awareness of international, Federal, State, and local efforts to fight methamphetamine production and abuse.

The establishment of this national observance now would be both timely and appropriate. Methamphetamine continues to invade communities across America. The Drug Enforcement Administration reports that seizures of methamphetamine labs within the United States have more than doubled in a recent 5-year period, from 7,438 in 1999 to 17,170 in 2004. Methamphetamine can be easily produced using over-the-counter ingredients in illegal "meth labs" set up throughout communities in homes, apartments, or cars. The volatile and toxic ingredients used to produce this dangerous and highly addictive drug can pose significant health risks to anyone exposed.

The evolving nature of this threat further exemplifies the need for continued education. In recent years, we have seen the number of domestic meth lab seizures decline in some areas and increase in others as the epidemic moves from west to east. For example, in 1999, there were 2,579 raids on domestic meth labs in the State of California, while only 439 were seized in Missouri. By 2004, seizures of meth labs in California had dwindled to 764, while seizures in Missouri had increased to an astonishing 2,788. As efforts to stop the domestic production of methamphetamine have gained momentum, imports from Mexico and abroad have supplemented domestic supply.

If we do not take immediate action to reduce the damage caused by methamphetamine use in the United States, we will continue to see its effects ripple through our communities. We look forward to working with you in proclaiming a "National Methamphetamine Prevention Week" as soon as possible. In addition, we encourage you to establish this week of observance in accordance with standard school schedules, providing an opportunity for primary and secondary schools throughout the country to engage students in activities to promote meth prevention. Thank you for your prompt attention to this issue.

Sincerely,

Maria Cantwell

United States Senator

Brian Baird

Member of Congress

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